

Our ref: TS/NQ Socio/10/05

September 2005

To: SQA Co-ordinator  
Secondary Schools and FE Colleges

Action by Recipient	
	Response required
✓	Note and pass on
	None — update/information only

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Dear Colleague

## **NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN SOCIOLOGY**

The contents of this letter should be passed to the member of staff responsible for National Qualifications in Sociology.

### **Diet 2005**

The Principal Assessor and Senior Moderator reports for diet 2005 can now be found on SQA's website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)). These include:

- ◆ PA report Intermediate 1 and 2 Sociology
- ◆ PA report Higher Sociology
- ◆ PA report Advanced Higher Sociology
- ◆ SM report National Qualification Units

### **Appeals**

The procedures for stage 1 and 2 appeals were completed during September and October. Colleagues are requested to follow the guidance set out in the following document prior to submitting appeals:

*'Estimates, Absentees and External Assessment Appeals: guidance on evidence requirements – April 2004'*. This document can be accessed/downloaded from SQA's website.

The number of appeals at both Higher and Intermediate 2 levels were down on last session. This would indicate that staff are preparing candidates well for the examination and that estimates were more accurate. There were however a number of problems found in evidence submitted for appeals. The most commonly were:

- ◆ Evidence was partial and did not sufficiently represent the whole course.
- ◆ Evidence had been marked inconsistently, did not match the national standard or standards had been interpreted leniently.
- ◆ Evidence had not been graded nor any comments made on why a candidate had been estimated at a particular grade.
- ◆ Evidence submitted did not match the estimate made.
- ◆ Evidence produced outwith supervised conditions.

Most of the above problems were reported in the 2004 update letter, however, similar problems were replicated in 2005.

Centres should note that the above problems may disadvantage candidates.

### **Marking Instructions**

The finalised marking instructions for Diet 2005 Course assessments at each level are posted on the Sociology page of SQA's website. It is hoped that these will be of benefit to staff when preparing a prelim paper or when submitting evidence in the event of making appeals.

### **National Qualifications Review**

The review of Sociology Courses is now complete and a specimen question paper and National Assessment Bank packs at Higher are currently being prepared and will be available at the launch seminar on 11 November at the SFEU offices in Stirling. Arrangements documents for Intermediate 2 and Higher and Unit specifications at Intermediate 1 will be published on the Sociology page of SQA's website prior to the seminar. Details of the launch seminar are in centres and staff should register with the SQA Events Team as soon as possible.

The major issues addressed in the review were:

- ◆ The large number of options available across the course
- ◆ The predictability of the Course examination
- ◆ The burden of internal assessment.

Each of these issues has been addressed and, while the title of the Units remain the same, staff should note the major changes that have been made. At Higher level the Units are:

- ◆ *Understanding Human Society: The Sociological Approach* (Higher) continues to study different sociological theories and methods.
- ◆ *Understanding Human Society 1* (Higher) contains two mandatory topics – Social Stratification and Education.
- ◆ *Understanding Human Society 2* (Higher) contains four topics — The Sociology of the Family, The Sociology of Crime and Deviance, The Sociology of the Mass Media and The Sociology of Welfare and Poverty.

Questions in the Course assessment will be more focused and less predictable than in the current exam.

Section 1 will have one set of restricted response questions based on *Understanding Human Society: The Sociological Approach*

Section 2 will have one essay question on either stratification or education — there will be no choice in this section

Section 3 will have four essays based on each of the four topics and candidates answer the essay of their choice.

At Intermediate 2 the Units are:

***Studying Human Society: The Sociological Approach (Intermediate 2)***

A variety of sociological theories and the particular perspectives they give to the explanation of human social behaviour are studied at an introductory level.

***Social Stratification (Intermediate 2)***

The Unit seeks to explore the variety of ways in which individuals may be classified into different social groups using socially generated criteria.

***Socialisation: An Introduction (Intermediate 2)***

This Unit looks at socialisation as a key concept in sociology. The diversity of socially acquired behaviour and the ways in which the culture of a society is internalised by individuals through socialisation processes and agencies are key areas of study.

The structure of the Course assessment is:

Section A — one set of restricted response questions based on *Understanding Human Society: The Sociological Approach* (Intermediate 2)

Section B — one set of restricted response questions based on *Socialisation* (Intermediate 2)

Section C — one essay based on *Stratification* (Intermediate 2)

Units at Intermediate 1 have the same titles and hierarchical in terms of content and progression. There will be no Course Assessment at this level.

**Marking for SQA**

Each year the number of entries for the Sociology Courses is increasing. If you are interested in becoming a marker in Sociology, an application form can be downloaded from SQA's website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)). Alternatively, please contact us on 0131-561 6825 and we will send a form to you. To become a Marker, we normally ask that you have taught the Course for at least three years, preferably within the past three years. We welcome applications throughout the year and, where a suitable vacancy exists, we may be able to offer an appointment for this year. Course papers are Centrally Marked — this entails the marker marking scripts over one extended period in the same venue. In a number of subject areas we have had recent examples where the results in centres have improved dramatically after a member of staff joined the marking team. The experience of marking helps to increase the awareness of the demands of Course assessment and is proven to be excellent professional and personal development.

**Assessment Panel**

The Social Sciences Assessment Panel continues to meet twice a year to look at issues arising in Sociology as well as the other social sciences subjects. Colleagues are free to feed issues arising in their subject to the Panel either directly through panel members or via SQA officers. The membership of this Assessment Panel has been revised and the first meeting took place during November 2004.

I hope that you find the above information useful. If you would like to discuss any matter in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact me either by telephone on 0141-242 2343 or by e-mail to: [tom.stannage@sqa.org.uk](mailto:tom.stannage@sqa.org.uk).

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Stannage". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Tom Stannage  
Qualifications Manager  
NQ Social Subjects

### Summary of content of revised Higher Course

The Course comprises of three mandatory Units, which focus on a variety of sociological theories and the explanations of human social behaviour they provide.

- ◆ *Studying Human Society: The Sociological Approach* Unit, focuses on sociological theories and research methods.
- ◆ *Understanding Human Society 1*, candidates will study the sociology of class stratification and the sociology of education.
- ◆ *Understanding Human Society 2* candidates will study two topics from a choice of four.

### ***Studying Human Society: The Sociological Approach (Higher)***

All sociology rests upon concepts, theories and methods, which characterise its distinctive approach in explaining human social behaviour. The Unit introduces a variety of sociological theories and their particular explanations of human social behaviour. These include:

#### **Features, analysis and evaluation of theories**

##### **Structural theories**

Consensus theory: *functionalism*

Conflict theories: *Marxism, neo-Marxism, feminism*

##### **Consensus versus conflict theories**

Action theories: Weberian theory, symbolic interactionism

##### **Structuralist versus action theories**

##### **The research process/strategy**

##### **Research methods that generate quantitative data**

##### **Research methods that generate qualitative data**

### ***Understanding Human Society 1***

This Unit focuses on the sociological understanding of two substantive areas of human social behaviour. These two areas, which are mandatory, are:

- ◆ the sociology of class stratification
- ◆ the sociology of education

Whilst the Unit focuses on the UK, wherever possible cross-cultural or comparative studies may be used for purposes of comparison.

**Three** contrasting theories (specified for stratification but not for education), **two** studies, plus **two** features, **two** changes and **two** aspects will be covered in the sociology of class stratification. The sociology of education topic differs only in that **three** aspects will be covered.

## ***Understanding Human Society 2***

The Unit is divided into four topic areas and candidates must study **two** of these topics. The four topics are:

- ◆ The sociology of the family
- ◆ The sociology of welfare and poverty
- ◆ The sociology of crime and deviance
- ◆ The sociology of the mass media

Whilst the Unit focuses on the UK, wherever possible cross-cultural or comparative studies may be used for purposes of comparison.

**Two** contrasting theories, **two** studies, plus **two** features, **two** changes and **three** aspects will be covered for each topic.

The Intermediate 2 Course is made up of three Units that focus on:

- ◆ the theoretical underpinning and strategies used by sociologists to produce the evidence upon which sociological knowledge is based
- ◆ the ways in which individuals and groups are classified by socially generated criteria
- ◆ the diversity of socially acquired behaviour

### ***Studying Human Society: The Sociological Approach (Intermediate 2)***

The Unit addresses the variety of sociological theories and the particular perspectives they give to the explanation of human social behaviour at an introductory level. It includes an introductory analysis of functionalist, Marxist, social action and feminist perspectives as explanations that seek to analyse, interpret and understand the social world.

The Unit should be approached in the following way:

- 1 Differences between common sense and sociological explanations
- 2 Introduction to the main sociological theories
- 3 Primary and secondary research methods
- 4 Introduction to the main methods of research investigation used by sociologists

### ***Social Stratification (Intermediate 2)***

The Unit seeks to explore the variety of ways in which individuals may be classified into different social groups using socially generated criteria. The **five** categories of social stratification have considerable impact upon the lives of individuals and social groups.

The Unit should be approached in the following way:

- 1 The concept of social stratification in modern society should be introduced through a definition and brief study of **three** of the following categories of social stratification:

- ◆ social class
  - ◆ gender
  - ◆ race and ethnicity
  - ◆ age
  - ◆ disability.
- 2 The sociological significance of social stratification.
  - 3 The effects of stratification upon the lives of individuals and groups in terms of inequality and opportunities for social mobility.

***Socialisation: An Introduction (Intermediate 2)***

Socialisation is a key concept in sociology because it accounts for the diversity of socially acquired behaviour and it demonstrates the ways in which the culture of a society is internalised by individuals through socialisation processes and agencies.

This Unit should be approached with reference to the following indicative features:

- 1 The relative nature of social norms, values and roles
- 2 The six main agents of socialisation

Each of the above structural features should be studied in the context of the socialisation process and emphasis should be placed upon cultural difference and changes.